

# Red Karen language

**Red Karen** or **Karenni**, known in Burmese as **Kayah**, is a Karen dialect continuum spoken by over half a million Kayah people (Red Karen) in Burma.

The name *Kayah* is "a new name invented by the Burmese to split them off from other Karen".<sup>[5]</sup>

Eastern Kayah is reported to have been spoken by 260,000 in Burma and 100,000 in Thailand in 2000, and Western Kayah by 210,000 in Burma in 1987. They are rather divergent. Among the Western dialects are Yintale and kayahManu (*Manumanaw* in Burmese).

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## Distribution and varieties

**Eastern Kayah** is spoken in:<sup>[1]</sup>

- Shadaw township, Kayah State (east of the Thanlwin River)
- Langkho district, Shan State

Eastern Kayah dialects are Upper Eastern Kayah and Lower Eastern Kayah, which are mutually intelligible. The speech variety of Huai Sua Thaw village (Lower Eastern) is prestigious for both dialect groups. The Eastern Kayah have difficulty understanding the Western Kayah.

**Western Kayah** is spoken in Kayah State and Kayin State, east of the Thanlwin River. It is also spoken in Pekon township in southern Shan State.<sup>[1]</sup>

- northern dialect: Shan State (north of Loikaw)
- southern dialect: Hpruso and Dimawso townships (south of Loikaw)

Western Kayah dialects are part of a dialect continuum of Central Karen varieties stretching from Thailand. They include:<sup>[1]</sup>

Karenni	
Kayah	
<i>Karenni</i>	
Native to	Burma, Thailand
Ethnicity	Kayah
Native speakers	187,000 (2000–2007) <sup>[1]</sup>
Language family	Sino-Tibetan <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Karen languages<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Sgaw–Bghai<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Karenni</b></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul>
Writing system	Kayah Li (eky,kyu) <div>Latin (kyu,kxf)</div> Myanmar (kyu,kxf) <div>unwritten (kvy)</div>
Official status	
Recognised minority language in	<div><span><span></span></span> Thailand</div> <div><span><span></span></span> Myanmar</div>
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	Variously: <div>eky – Eastern Kayah</div> <div>kyu – Western Kayah</div> <div>kvy – Yintale</div> <div>kxf – Manumanaw (Manu)</div>
Glottolog	kaya1317 ( <span>http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/kaya1317</span> ) <span>Kayah</span> <sup>[2]</sup> <div>yint1235 (<span>http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/yint1235</span>) <span>Yintale Karen</span><sup>[3]</sup><div>manu1255 (<span>http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/manu1255</span>)</div><span>Manumanaw Karen</span><sup>[4]</sup></div>

- Northern dialect of Western Kayah
- Southern dialect of Western Kayah
- Dawtama
- Dawnnnyjekhu
- Sounglog
- Chi Kwe
- Wan Cheh

**Yintale**, reportedly a variety of Western Kayah, is spoken in 3 villages of Hpasawng township, Bawlake district, Kayah State.<sup>[1]</sup>

Yintale dialects are Bawlake and Wa Awng.

**Kawyaw**, reportedly similar to Western Kayah, is spoken in 23 villages along the border of Bawlake and Hpruso townships, in the West Kyebogyi area of Kayah State.

Kawyaw dialects are Tawkhu and Doloso, which have been reported to be difficult to mutually understand.

## References

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1. Eastern Kayah (<https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/ekyl/>) at *Ethnologue* (18th ed., 2015)  
Western Kayah (<https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/kyul/>) at *Ethnologue* (18th ed., 2015)  
Yintale (<https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/kvyl/>) at *Ethnologue* (18th ed., 2015)  
Manumanaw (Manu) (<https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/kxf/>) at *Ethnologue* (18th ed., 2015)
2. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Kayah" (<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/kaya1317>). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
3. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Yintale Karen" (<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/yint1235>). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
4. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Manumanaw Karen" (<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/manu1255>). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
5. Christopher Beckwith, International Association for Tibetan Studies, 2002. *Medieval Tibeto-Burman languages*, p. 108.

## Further reading

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- Aung, Wai Lin. 2013. *A Descriptive Grammar of Kayah Monu* ([http://inter.payap.ac.th/wp-content/uploads/linguistics\\_students/Wei\\_Ling\\_Aung\\_Thesis\\_rev.ACK\\_.pdf](http://inter.payap.ac.th/wp-content/uploads/linguistics_students/Wei_Ling_Aung_Thesis_rev.ACK_.pdf)). Master's thesis, Payap University.
- Kirkland, Courtney, and Erin Dawkins. 2007. *A Sociolinguistic survey of Eastern Kayah Li in Thailand* (<http://li.payap.ac.th/images/stories/survey/A%20Sociolinguistic%20Survey%20of%20Eastern%20Kayah%20Li%20in%20Thailand.pdf>). Chiang Mai: Payap University.
- Shintani Tadahiko. 2018. *The Yintalay language*. Linguistic survey of Tay cultural area (LSTCA) no. 115. Tokyo: Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa (ILCAA).

## External links

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- "E-books for children with narration in Karenni" (<http://www.uniteforliteracy.com/>). *Unite for Literacy library*. Retrieved 2014-06-21.
  - Eastern Kayah Li basic lexicon at the Global Lexicostatistical Database (<http://starling.rinet.ru/cgi-bin/response.cgi?root=new100&morpho=0&basename=new100\stb\krn&limit=-1>)
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